

Corey Andrew Powell (00:02):

I am joined today by Stedman Graham, chairman and CEO of S. Graham and associates. His Identity Leadership book and programs are driven by his proprietary nine-step success process that teaches the value of understanding and embracing identity. Mr. Graham, welcome to Motivational Mondays.

Stedman Graham (00:19):

Oh wow. Thank you so much for having me. I appreciate it very much.

Corey Andrew Powell (00:23):

Well, we are happy you're here too. And it is an honor to speak with you because so many of your different platforms now that wrap around identity are so aligned with the NLS. So we're just happy to have you. So let's jump right in and begin with your book Identity leadership. When we look at this project, it's not an outsider approach, looking in, it reads like a personal philosophy of yours based on your own direct experiences. So to begin with, what is identity leadership and why did you write the book and create this program?

Stedman Graham (00:54):

Corey, that's a great question. Identity leadership is, based on the philosophy that you can't lead anybody else into you for lead yourself. So, man, I can't tell you, it took me a long time to realize all your issues, all your issues that you'll ever have pretty much you'll have to solve by yourself and you need the tools and the acumen to be able to do that. That's a development issue and we go to school, we go to college we go, we get a job. We, you know, learn a trade. We learn, you know, our expertise so that we're able to basically improve our social economic development, take care of ourselves and take care of our family. And do we have the tools to be able to do that? And today, it used to be a little different 30 years where you can just get a job.

Stedman Graham (01:45):

Now you need to be a self director, learner, a lifelong learner because of technology and the technology is moving forward. And most of us are moving backwards because our educational system hasn't kept up with our ability to be relevant. And it hasn't caught up with our ability for us to, to self-actualize our potential. So you need additional supplemental information that will help you learn how to again, take information and make it relevant to who you are transfer to your mind. So you become a thinking human being and then transfer that to the American free enterprise system or the global market to create into design your own future today, you need that. And so the nine step success process I created for myself as a way to define my own existence and to really find freedom in my own life. I was looking for equality most of my life.

Stedman Graham (02:38):

And so this process helped me find out who I was as a person, and then to be able to self actualize it through eight other steps. The first step being, you gotta know you who you are, you have to have an identity and then you have to be able to self actualize that. So man, when I realized that this process was very helpful to me and I had to define my own existence, I also realized that there were millions of people around the world, actually, billions of people around the world who were pretty much lost the same way I was, they were looking for equality and value. And so I created this, you know, for other people as a result, to be able to take this program and make it relevant to other people's lives. So I can empower them the same way that I learned how to empower myself.

Corey Andrew Powell (03:26):

Now, with that, you've mentioned equality. And I'm just curious to define that. Are you referring to racial equality or just workplace equality or, and what term do you mean by equality?

Stedman Graham (03:38):

Corey. So, when I talk about equality, I'm talking about race, you know, racial equality. I had a race-based consciousness. I thought you couldn't make it because of your color of your skin —wrong. You can't make it cuz you, you really don't know who you are. And so race is a way that people try to put you in a box and label you. Gender is another form of equality that where women are taught that it's a man's world and you have to be able to get beyond that. It's not about it being a man's world. The problem is you don't know who you are. You're defined by your privilege. A lot of the times, again, that's a label and that puts you in a box. It's not about your privilege. It's about understanding and really who you are. And so you're defined by house and car and money and title.

Stedman Graham (04:25):

And, and I was defined by my relationship with Oprah, so I'm put into a box based on that. I was defined by my family. Two special need brothers in my family. I had to grow up with that grew up with low. Self-esteem a lack of confidence in myself, defined by race and defined by all these other things. These labels that, that really are socially constructed and designed to marginalize your programming and to marginalize who you are as a person. So you really don't get down to the core of how to build your life and create self empowerment.

Corey Andrew Powell (04:58):

Yes, that's a really, really strong point because I think many of our members as well, who are college age students, they may be living in like the shadow of what their parents may have wanted for them. Or they may actually be in the shadow of an older sibling or someone else that they're being compared to or aligned with. And they haven't defined themselves. And that brings me to, when you talk about often people are looking for their purpose in life and we don't know where to start. I mean, I was one of those people. I think I have a pretty good path now, but it took me a minute to, to figure it out. But when it comes to that, you say people have to begin with their passions and their skills and their abilities. Like if they can identify those things, right, that helps shape their purpose in life. Can you expand on that a little?

Stedman Graham (05:42):

A little? Yeah. Today is it's really a skill built, uh, society today. I mean, you have to have skills today. Either you have skills, either you're in or you're out if you don't have them. So our learning should be designed for us to be relevant for future jobs, entrepreneurship, business opportunities, talents, and abilities so that we can basically carve our own path out so we can become experts in our field. So we become good at what we do. And we should be able to repeat that and improve upon that based on understanding how to organize information, to empower ourselves every day. You know, what makes people equal is that everybody has 24 hours. Question is what are you doing with your 24 hours? So we should be building, designing and creating our own future based on that, what with the right information and the right information should be relevant to what makes us happy?

Stedman Graham (06:41):

What we're passionate about, what we care about, what we actually love. And that's gonna allow us to sustain success over a long period of time. First of all, it's gonna allow us to begin to build a process for success and allow us to start organize and understand how to organize for college students, the education that they get every single day, how to apply it to their own development, not just lose it and walk away with a degree and then come out and say, well, you know, someone will ask you, what do you know, what have you learned? And you say, I don't know anything. I haven't learned anything. So you need a process for success that allows you to build design and create your own future that you can control. You can measure, that you can create impact with within your own existence. That makes you feel good about who you are as a person.

Corey Andrew Powell (07:35):

That speaks to a long standing issue. You, I think a lot of young college students have had where they may not feel like when they get there that they belong there. They may feel like they're not college material. That term that's been used so much because it's based on some sort of like standardized ideology. Whereas what you're saying is, you know, there's a very specific sort of way in which an individual processes things for themselves, right. And takes in knowledge and makes things work for them, as opposed to trying to be someone else's ideal when it comes to learning.

Stedman Graham (08:10):

Right? You can't, there's no cookie cutter when you talk about self-actualization self-empowerment self-improvement and when talk about the nine step success process, this process is an individual approach for your development based on your uniqueness, based on your brand value, based on what you bring to the table. So your ability to understand how to do that, right? It's what I teach and what I've dedicated my life to doing. And so we eliminate all, all of the labels and we start with the core of what's natural and what's organic. What is organic for you as a foundational base so that you can actually build and improve your existence, improve your life. So you could determine your own value and not be defined by the outside world. It's not how the world defines you, which is what I learned is how you define yourself. But do you have the tools to be able to do that? Because you are with yourself, all of the time, so that the philosophy of this is the more you have, the more you can give to others. But if you don't have it, you know, you're only as good as what you can build for yourself. You can't give it back to someone else.

Corey Andrew Powell (09:28):

Yeah. That connects directly to another one of your most poignant thoughts. I think for me anyway, resonates real, really strongly with me, which is you're not your circumstances. You are your possibilities. And I absolutely love that. First of all, it calls to question our own accountability for success. But what I wanna know is how do you suggest that people not get stuck in their current negative situation and move forward? You know, when they feel like maybe permanently, they are stuck in that circumstance. So how do you suggest they move forward?

Stedman Graham (09:59):

They move forward because they're able to manage a different process for themselves. Other than what they've been taught, they are able to get beyond the trauma and the pain points they're able to organize their life order is the highest level of development. So, Corey, this is an organizational process of building your empowerment and it starts with you not living out of your history, but living out of your imagination, not creating who you are, but who you can become and working toward that. That's what college education should be about. That's what education should be about. That's what our, our experiences should be about. That's what our opportunities, you know, living in the greatest country in the world, which in America is all about— being able to improve that regardless of our circumstances, regardless of the fact that you didn't have parent support, or maybe you didn't have a father, or maybe you didn't have, you know, a mother or maybe you, whatever the situation may be, you're able to get beyond it because you build from the bottom up. You build a core of who you are.

Stedman Graham (11:08):

You're able to self actualize your potential and your talents and what you love. And you're able to find love in your life, as opposed to going back to that comfortable situation of having low self-esteem, having a lack of confidence. Going back to woe is me going back to being a victim, going back to how people put you in a box and how they define your existence. So that's no longer acceptable. You know, once you begin to understand who you are and realize how to organize information and education and making it relevant to you, to make you a better person every day, that's the process of success. That's the process of improvement and that's how it should work. And especially in a global marketplace, having access to technology today. Sorry, that answer took so long.

Corey Andrew Powell (11:57):

No, that's a wonderful answer. And again, that question resonates for me because I lived it. I went to New York city to be an artist. I was gonna be the next Michael Jackson, if you had asked me when I was five, right. And at 36, that was not the case I was working like at the mall for 15 bucks an hour, nothing wrong with that. But at 36, that's a little up there. Right? And I made the decision at that age to go to college. I said, there's one thing missing that I need to assess my life and know that's missing. And I formalized my ability to communicate with a proper degree. And it changed my trajectory changed my life, but it came from not getting into the woe is me. I had to have the awareness and say, I need to fix it versus getting in a funk. You know? So I think that is exactly why I asked that question. Cuz many people can't get out of that rut.

Stedman Graham (12:43):

Well, you know, I mean, I'm, I'm, I'm doing this interview with you and you're man, you are smart, talented, articulate, you know, you uh, are, you know, you have it. To be able to build that correctly, to be able to put the pieces of the puzzle together correctly. I mean, that's why I've dedicated my life to this to get, to get people, to understand what I've learned, what I've been looking for all of my life, which is the ability to empower yourself and not be defined by the outside world, not have them control your existence, control your economic development, control your social development, to control who you can become, you know? And, and not cap it out and not tell you and program you to believe that you can't make it because of the labels, you know, that you've been given.

Stedman Graham (13:32):

So the break out of that get to the core of who you are, which is to utilize your intellect and your talents and your ability and your potential and your natural ability, you know, and those things that you can aspire to that you haven't even discovered yet. So the ability to use all of that in a very effective way and impactful way is the journey. You know, it's what we're all looking for on the outside. Where do you get it? Who do you get it from? What's it look like? So I write these books and I do workshops, and I'm doing this work to get the right message out. So people are not confused all over the world, you know, regardless of what you look like, what's your background is, what your gender is, what your nationality is, where you come from. It doesn't make any difference because the process of success is the same for everybody. The difference is some people know it. Some people don't and the people that know it, they don't wanna deliver that information to you because you might get smart. You might be able to control your own existence. You might get past the labels. You might start building

something for yourself. So it's always the power against the powerless and give you the power is based on giving you the right content and the right information, first.

Corey Andrew Powell (14:54):

Thank you for listening to Motivational Mondays presented by the National Society of Leadership and Success and available wherever you listen to your favorite podcast. I'm Corey Andrew Powell, and I'll see you again here next week.